THE NINTH DAY.

24th February 1915.

The Assembly met at 11 A. M. on Wednesday, the 24th February 1915.

152. Effects of recent reorganisations in certain departments.

Mr. K. Govinda Pillai (Member, Mavelikara taluk) proposed to show how far the reorganisations of some of the departments of the State had been beneficial to the public and whether they admitted of any and what retrenchment. That retrenchment was necessary and inevitable was evident from a consideration of the facts and figures disclosed in the last Administration Report. The finances had reached a state of unstable equilibrium and the Government ought therefore to set about adjusting their expenditure by a process of severe retrenchment. The Member added that the recent departmental reorganisations were characterised by the enhancement of the number and pay of the staff in the higher ranks of the service. The reorganisations were also effected with a view to create posts for a few individuals instead of selecting men for posts. All the reorganisations were not necessary steps and the Government would be perfectly justified in adopting a policy of retrenchment and modifying those reorganisations as the exigencies of the hour demanded. He then proceeded to consider the various departmental reorganisations and dealt with the Public Works, Police and Education Departments in particular.

Public Works Department.—The department was reorganised by G. O. No. 6640 A/P. W., dated 20th October 1910. The lavishness of expenditure which resulted from the reorganisation was not warranted by the conditions of the country The reasons assigned for such expenditure were :—

(1) The office work and inspection work put together was too much for one Chief Engineer, and hence the appointment of a Deputy Chief Engineer. The argument was equally applicable to all departments. Consistent with that argument, there ought to be a Deputy to every head of department in the State.

(2) Efficiency of work required the provision of more Assistant and Executive Engineers than there were Divisions and Sub-Divisions, to fill up vacancies that might occur consequent upon Engineers going on furlough. The Travancore Service Regulations allowed all officers alike the right to take leave or furlough and, in the usual course of things, when one officer took leave, the one next to him was made to act for him and the incidental vacancies filled from below. There was no practice in the State or outside to have officers paid and kept in reserve for filling up vacancies. The Member failed to see any special principle applicable to the Public Works Department alone.

(3) The proportion of the cost of establishment to the cost of works being lower than 20 per cent, which the Government fixed as a fair proportion, an additional amount might be spent on the establishment as was done in British India. The argument of proportion was the Member said, an illusion. In calculating the cost of establishment, the sum paid to the temporary staff was not included. The lower subordinates of the Public Works Department *viz.*, surveyors, maistries and others who were actually employed in work, were paid from the sum included in the estimates. Generally, about 12 per cent of the estimates went to the above kind of staff. If that also be added to the cost of establishment, the proportion would go to more than 26 per cent. In British India, the above staff was also included in the establishment. The Member advocated the adoption of the above change. The executive divisions and sub-divisions of the State were smaller in extent than those of British India and the number of sub-divisions and sections, of Engineers, Supervisors and Overseers

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might well be reduced. Retrenchment was therefore possible by a reduction of the staff.

Retrenchment was also possible by a more efficient checking of the expenditure of the department. There must be, in the opinion of the Member, an expert in the Secretariat to check the Public Works estimates. The absence of such a professional officer rendered the Government helpless in the matter of efficient checking. The status of the officer should be such that he should not covet a promotion in the Public Works Department.

Estimates were generally prepared by the departmental subordinates who were interested in magnifying the cost of works so as to work out a resultant gain. The higher officers were generally ignorant of local conditions and therefore exercised little discretion in the preparation of estimates. Very often the estimates betrayed an absence of any sense of proportion and regard for public money, as for instance the expenditure on an Elementary School or a village office building. The swollen estimate were also due to the contract system. Contracts were not given to the lowest bidder but were given only to a chosen few. The chosen contractors of the department spent only half the allotted amount and the rest was therefore embezzled.

The Member then said that the 'hand receipt' system by which Overseers and Supervisors spent a considerable amount of the allotment under "contingencies" should be thoroughly overhauled, as the system was liable to be abused to the serious detriment of public funds.

In that connection, he suggested the formation of a P. W. D. Board including the representatives of the people for each Sub-division, so as to give the people an opportunity to know the working of the department and the department to ascertain the popular opinion regarding their work.

With regard to the Workshop Division, the Member observed that the public did not know the exact function of that branch of work. The Administration Report of the Department showed a large item of expenditure on account of tools etc. That showed that the Workshop did not even supply the department with the necessary tools etc. He said that the utility of the Workshop to the Government and the people should be carefully investigated. He also pointed out the economic consequences of Heads of Departments, including the Chief Engineer, contracting with European Firms for the supply of materials in preference to several Indian Firms and urged that the Government should look into the matter without delay.

The Member next referred to the unnecessary expenditure incurred in the distribution of stores from the central store at Trivandrum instead of sending them to different centres from the port of arrival of the goods concerned. Greater foresight and professional skill had to be exercised in the use of costly machines and in ordering them. As regards the annual allotment sanctioned for the maintenance of village roads, *viz.*, Rs. 28,000, the Member stated that the amount was wasted, as no good work was done. The roads were invariably neglected. If the Government withheld the amount for half a dozen years, that fund would suffice for the construction of new roads pressed for by the Members of the Assembly. He requested that the department might be instructed not to spend any amount in the maintenance of village roads unless the villagers demanded for special departmental attention.

Education Department.—As regards the Education Department, the Member endorsed the opinions of the Members who had already spoken on the subject, and he requested that the Government should introduce the necessary changes in the light of the suggestions made by those Members.

Police Department.—The two outstanding features of the department after its reorganisation were, he said, the creation of Prosecuting and Circle Inspectors. As regards the Prosecuting Inspectors, the Member disagreed with some of the previous speakers on the subject and said that he did not consider the appointment of those Inspectors unnecessary. But the post of Circle Inspectors was an extravagant superfluity. The appointment did not contribute in the least degree to the enhancement of departmental efficiency or discipline. The scope of work of the

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Circle Inspectors was not defined and if their function consisted of supervision of the work of the Sub-Inspectors, it was quite unnecessary and superfluous since the Sub-Inspectors would be generally recruited from educated men and the supervision of the work by the District Superintendents as of old would be sufficient for all practical purposes.

The Member next referred to the system of enlistment of constables. Any person with the requisite physical fitness could obtain admission into the department. Sufficient care and caution were not bestowed on the selection of men and hence there was no appreciable cessation of corruption amongst the lower ranks of the service. He suggested that it would be possible to enrol a large number of Elementary School Leaving Certificate men by raising the lowest pay of constables. He expressed his regret that the reorganisation of the department effected at the cost of nearly one lakh of rupees should have failed to materially benefit the poor and hard worked constables. He also pointed out that the number of constables was insufficient and should be increased. The Police deplorably lacked in preventive action, and crime was undoubtedly on the increase and should of course be checkmated by the exercise of greater Police vigilance.

In conclusion, he advocated the appointment of one who knew the country and its people, their customs, language and traditions as the Commissioner of Police.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

153. Grievances of the inhabitants of the Kallupara pakuthi belonging to the Edappalli Chief.

Mr. K. Govinda Pillai (Member, Thiruvalla taluk) said that, while the rest of the country was enjoying the benefits of the abolition of payment of land-tax in kind, the inhabitants of the Kallupara *pakuthi* in the Thiruvalla taluk had to pay their tax in kind, because the *pakuthi* belonged to the Edappalli Chief. There was no justification for the differential treatment in the face of section 2 of the Estates Rent Recovery Regulation, IV of 1068, which laid down that the holders of land in the Estate of Edappalli should have the same rights in respect of their holdings as the holders of Sirkar lands. He therefore prayed for the commutation of the land-tax due to the chief into money as in the case of the Sirkar lands.

At present the Chief realised the dues from the ryots and gave them nothing in return by way of roads, bridges &c. Some provision should be made to remove the complaint on that account.

It was also necessary to make some arrangements for the grant of copies of chittas relating to the *pakuthi* to applicants without much delay.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

154. Grievances of the people of the Ettumanur taluk and suggestions for remedying the same.

Mr. K. Govinda Pillai (Member, Ettumanur taluk) said that the taluk was once an extensive one and that, with the transfer of some portions of it to the taluks of Vaikom and Kottayam, it became reduced in size and consequently suffered in a variety of ways. As instances he mentioned the absence of a Town Improvement Committee for the town, and the representation of the taluk at the Assembly by means of only one member. He then mentioned the following grievances specifically and suggested the remedies for removing the same:—

(1) The Elakad *pakuthi*, which was but 5 miles from Ettumanur, was 24 miles away from Muvattupuzha. The registration jurisdiction of the *pakuthi* was with the Ettumanur Registrar, but the revenue and Magisterial jurisdiction was vested in the Muvattupuzha Tahsildar and Magistrate respectively. Owing to its distance from the seat of the Magistrate and with the abolition of the out-post station at Pulluvattom, the *pakuthi* became a refuge for criminals. The Government had decided against the alteration of jurisdiction. His prayer was that the decision should be reconsidered and the revenue and magisterial jurisdiction of the *pakuthi* transferred to Ettumanur.

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